



Lake Land trustees hear details on prison programs

January 13, 2014 By KAYLEIGH ZYSKOWSKI JG-TC Staff Writer

MATTOON — On Monday, the Lake Land College Board of Trustees heard a presentation about the Illinois Department of Corrections program, which allows inmates within prisons across the state to gain education through 13 vocational programs.

Deans Jennifer Billingsly and Brandon Young shared enrollment figures, coursework and employment tallies from the 17 facilities within which the college operates.

Lake Land College provided courses such as construction trades, horticulture, food services, custodial maintenance or career technology to 7,347 inmates in 2013. The program is state funded — local tax dollars are not used for the effort — Lake Land simply facilitates the courses, administrators said following the presentation.

According to the program figures, most of the students are minorities. Lake Land is not associated with either of the state's two female prisons.

Billingsly and Young agreed that the goal of the program is to help with recidivism rates and to aid in job searches once inmates are released. Recent studies shows a recidivism rate of 62 percent for people without education and 12-13 percent for those with a post-secondary certificate, Young said.

"I didn't support this when it first came up years ago, but looking at the studies and the importance of an education for those being released from prison — the savings is enormous when comparing the cost to educate someone compared to incarcerating them," trustee Doris Reynolds said. "Education makes a tremendous difference."

Billingsly added that the cost to incarcerate one person per year is about \$21,000.

Looking ahead, program leaders hope to create more vocational programming to help fill the "middle skilled jobs gap" Illinois is facing, Young said.

In other business, the board, which met at the Workforce Development Center instead of on its usual meeting room on campus, approved a policy revision which changed the firearms and weapons policy to come into line with the state's new concealed carry law.

The board also:

— Approved Doebling, Winders & Co. LLP, of Mattoon to complete the next three fiscal years' audits. The 2015 fee will be \$63,000, according to a memo from Ray Rieck, vice president for business services.

“(Their) fees are very competitive. They are also an in-district accounting firm,” the memo says. The firm completed the most recent audit, for which it charged a \$62,800 fee.

— Accepted the John Ullrich Found Grant, which is designated for the agriculture programs. The amount of the grant was redacted from the public record.

— Accepted the Illinois Green Economy Network/Illinois Clean Energy Community Foundation Renewable Energy Installation grants to purchase solar photovoltaic systems, which should collectively produce about 400 kilowatt per hour per year, according to the school's records. The grants were in the amount of \$225,000 and \$419,956, respectively.

The purchase and installation of the equipment will be placed out for bid.

— Heard the first reading of a board policy revision that alters graduation requirements to allow for more transfer opportunities for Lake Land students and those who hope to transfer into the school.

— Accepted the Fiscal Year 2014 Delta Dental of Illinois Foundation Community Grant in the amount of \$10,000 to purchase a digital panoramic camera for the dental hygiene clinic. Lake Land was one of 14 awardees from across the state.

— Accepted a bid from Data Reproduction Corporation of Auburn Hills, Mich., to print the 2014-16 college catalog. The cost will be \$25,276.

— Entered into closed session to discuss personnel.

— Approved the annual faculty seniority list.

— Approved the 2014 meeting schedule.

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